

Downtown

Downtown Eau Claire is a mixed-use business center consisting of a blend of government, civic, office, entertainment, church, retail, medical, manufacturing, warehouse, and residential uses. The site of the 1872 incorporation of the City, the Downtown is adjacent to five established residential neighborhoods.

Through the late 1960s, the Downtown (then viewed as the North and South Barstow areas) served as the major retail center for a multi-county market region centered in Eau Claire. For the past thirty years, the Downtown has been undergoing a transition toward a different economic and civic role in the community. The growth of enclosed malls in the City's perimeter during the 1970s and 1980s resulted in the Downtown's decline as a regional retail district. The 1992 closing of the Uniroyal Tire Plant further contributed to the Downtown retail decline and also weakened stable home ownership patterns in the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Yet during the same period, the Downtown continued to experience new investment and positive change. The L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library was opened in 1976, and office and apartment buildings were added to the Downtown along Graham Avenue. The former Phoenix Steel brownfield site was cleared and remediated. Several blocks of blighted commercial and residential structures were cleared for redevelopment. The vacant Soo Line buildings were replaced with office buildings, and an office building was built on Bellinger Street. The vacant Uniroyal site was converted to a successful mixed-use development with over 100 businesses. Finally, RCU completed a new corporate headquarters office building in 2005.

At the beginning of the 21st century, while still facing significant economic challenges, the Downtown also has many of the assets needed for economic success. What has also evolved over the past several years is a clearer definition of the Downtown as a unique mixed-use business district. The *2005 Downtown Plan* is a guide for the major public and private investments that need to be made over the next twenty years to ensure the continued economic and civic revitalization of the Downtown. The recommendations of the plan focus on the transformation of the Downtown into a multi-functional town center active both day and night, seven days a week. The recommendations build on the existing strengths of the Downtown location and identify the market opportunities for additional retail, office, civic, and residential uses, as well as the physical and public policy improvements necessary to attract and sustain desired development and investment.

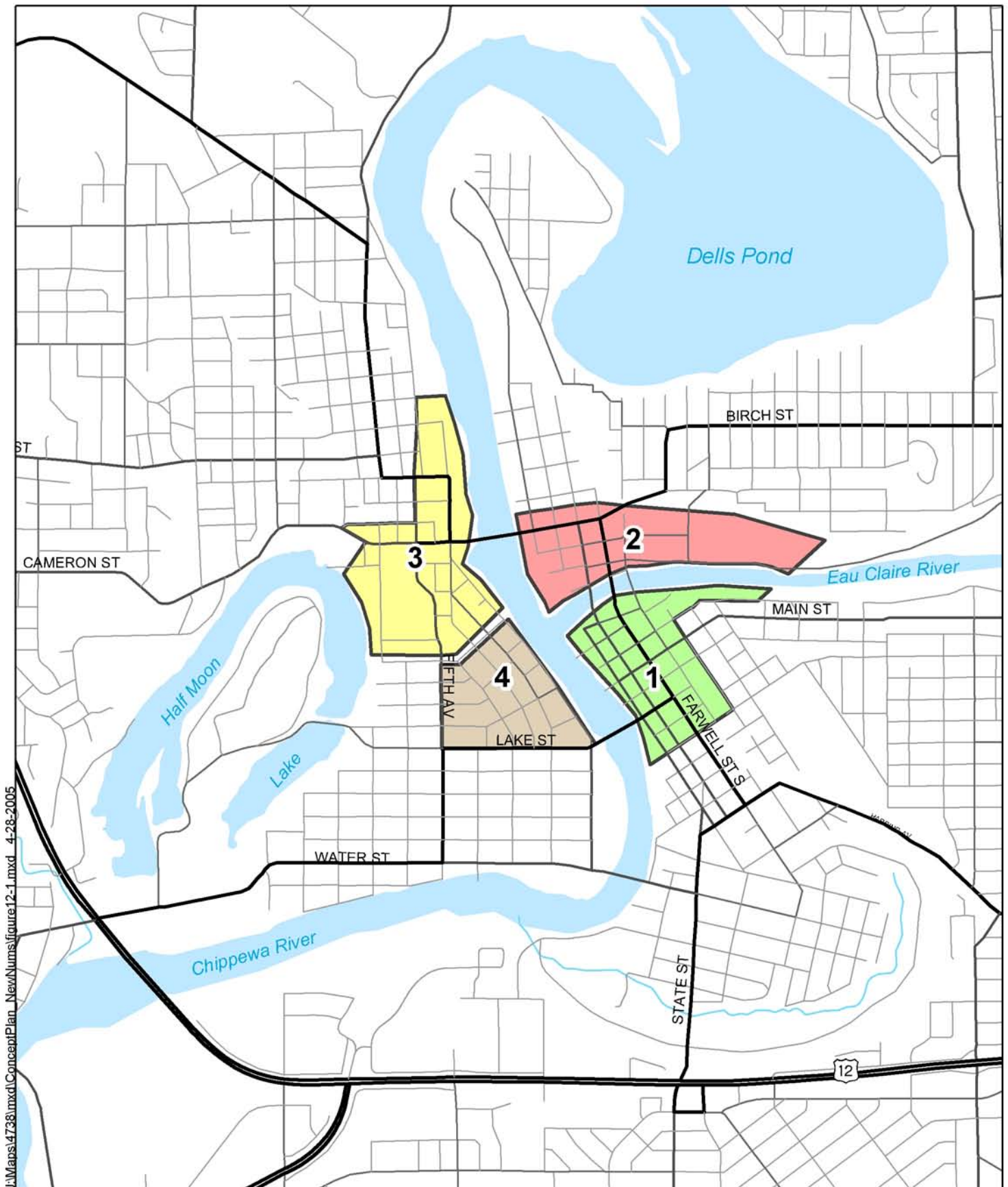
The Downtown encompasses the four distinct business areas shown on Figure 12-1:

- **Courthouse District** – The Courthouse District is bordered by Fulton Street on the north, the Chippewa River on the east, Lake Street on the south, and Fifth Avenue on the west. The district includes the County government campus, the West Grand Avenue Business Improvement District, a large number of historical houses and structures, several churches, and the surrounding residential neighborhood.

- **Historic Waterfront District** – The Historic Waterfront District is the traditional business center of the Downtown, generally bounded by Dewey Street on the east, the Eau Claire River on the north, the Chippewa River on the west, and Emery Street on the south. The district is the principal location for arts, entertainment, specialty business, numerous churches, civic and government uses, and includes much of the Downtown’s older commercial architecture, the Downtown Business Improvement District and the Former Soo Line Redevelopment Project area.
- **North Barstow District** – The North Barstow District is bounded by the Eau Claire River on south, the Chippewa River on the west, the commercial area along Madison Street on the north, and Banbury Place on the east. The district has a diverse mix of land uses ranging from light manufacturing to retail to corporate offices to housing, and includes the Banbury Place mixed-use development, the Phoenix Park and Trailhead facility, and the North Barstow Redevelopment Project area.
- **Medical Center District** – The Medical Center District is bounded by the Chippewa River on the east, Fulton Street on the south, Half Moon Lake on the west, and on the north by Cameron Street and the business area south of Maple Street between Bellinger and the river. The district includes expanding the Luther Midelfort-Mayo Health Systems campus, the City Parks and Recreation building, L.E. Phillips Senior Center, the West Madison Street Redevelopment Project area, and a mix of support retail and business uses.

Key Issues

1. **Obsolete Land Use:** What should the City do to redevelop blighted and obsolete land uses and encourage expanded long-term private reinvestment in the Downtown?
2. **Public Investment:** What should be the City’s level of investment in making and maintaining public facilities and infrastructure, such as streets, landscaping, parks, parking, and utilities in the Downtown?
3. **Riverfront:** What should the City do to develop, protect, or provide public access to the Eau Claire and Chippewa Rivers in the Downtown?
4. **Design Requirements:** What should the City do to promote or enforce design guidelines for building facades, lighting, signs, landscaping, parking, and other streetscape improvements in order to improve the visual clarity and impression of the Downtown?
5. **Historic Preservation:** What should the City do to incorporate preservation of historic architecture in the Downtown into economic revitalization?
6. **Residential Investment:** What should the City do to encourage investment in residential uses in the Downtown business areas and surrounding neighborhoods?



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Downtown Districts			
1	Historic Waterfront	3	Medical Center
2	North Barstow	4	Courthouse

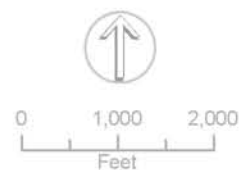


Figure 12-1

Downtown Districts

7. **Institutional Plans:** What should the City do to incorporate the institutional master planning for major activity centers, such as the County Courthouse, Luther Midelfort-Mayo Health System campus, and Banbury Place into the implementation of the *Downtown Plan*?
8. **Retail Support Services:** What should the City do to encourage the development and continuation of neighborhood retail services, including grocery stores, drug stores, convenience stores, dry-cleaners and video stores?
9. **Parking:** What should the City do to meet the short- and long-term parking needs of the Downtown over the next twenty years?
10. **Circulation:** What should the City do to provide adequate vehicle access to the Downtown and effective traffic circulation within the Downtown?
11. **Pedestrian Orientation:** What should the City do to provide a more walkable Downtown environment that encourages more pedestrian traffic among all four Downtown districts?
12. **Organization:** What should the City do to support an effective ongoing Downtown organization to provide an effective public-private partnership to market the Downtown and coordinate special events and promotions?

Goal and Objectives

Goal: Re-establish the Downtown as a regional mixed-use activity center integrating civic and government uses, professional and corporate offices, health care, meeting and entertainment facilities, arts and culture, housing, and specialty retail.

Objective 1 - Downtown Action Agenda: Ensure an effective and ongoing public-private partnership to continue implementation of the *Downtown Action Agenda 2001*.

Objective 2 - Business Development and Marketing: Provide business development and marketing support to encourage diverse economic activity in the Downtown.

Objective 3 - Redevelopment: Support redevelopment of blighted, vacant or underutilized properties and sites in the Downtown area.

Objective 4 - Riverfront Development: Encourage the use of the riverfront and adjacent open spaces as a key-organizing feature for the design and orientation of both public facilities and private development.

Objective 5 - Pedestrian Orientation: Enhance the walkability of the Downtown by ensuring safe, attractive, and pleasant pedestrian routes and connections within the Downtown area and between the Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, public parks, and major activity centers.

Objective 6 – Downtown Design: Encourage the consistent use of Downtown design standards and principles for buildings and public spaces to guide public and private developments in the Downtown.

Objective 7 – Circulation: Provide a safe internal circulation system that is interconnected among districts with pedestrian and vehicular, and multi-modal access from the peripheral highway system.

Objective 8 – Parking: Provide a well-integrated system of surface and ramp parking consistent with Downtown design principles to meet mixed-use parking needs of Downtown.

Objective 9 – Housing: Encourage a mix of housing styles and opportunities within and surrounding Downtown to meet the diverse economic needs of the community.

Objective 10 – Courthouse District: Encourage the development of the Courthouse District as a government activity center area emphasizing government and professional offices, personal services, and convenience retail and food establishments, serving primarily residents of the neighborhood and employees and users of the courthouse campus.

Objective 11 – Historic Waterfront District: Encourage the development of the Historic Waterfront District as the principal Downtown location for art, entertainment, civic uses, specialty businesses, and food establishments.

Objective 12 – North Barstow District: Encourage the development of the North Barstow district as the location for the Downtown's showcase riverfront development anchored by the North Barstow redevelopment area on the west, and the mixed industrial, business, and housing uses of Banbury Place to the east.

Objective 13 – Medical Center District: Encourage the development of the Medical Center District as a health care services activity center area anchored by the Luther Midelfort Hospital medical campus, related office uses, and convenience retail and support businesses.

Downtown Policies

Objective 1 – *Downtown Action Agenda:*

Ensure an effective and ongoing public-private partnership to continue implementation of the *Downtown Action Agenda 2001*.

Policies:

- 1. Lead Agency:** Continue to support Downtown Eau Claire, Incorporated (DECI) as the lead organization for coordinating economic development and marketing programs for the Downtown and implementing the *Downtown Action Agenda 2001*.

The Redevelopment Authority should continue to acquire and clear blighted sites and bring those sites to market. The City will regulate land use and provide infrastructure. DECI should assist with Downtown promotions and historic preservation efforts. Three Business Improvement Districts (BID) should be established and supported: the existing West Grand Avenue BID, an expanded Downtown BID encompassing all of the Historic Waterfront District, and a new North Barstow BID. The City Plan Commission will monitor the ongoing applicability of the *Comprehensive Plan*, as well as the consistency of redevelopment plans with the *Comprehensive Plan*.

2. **Active Role:** Support an active role by the City toward revitalization in conjunction with the private sector. That is, share the responsibility of taking initiatives to stimulate the development process, recruit developers, provide financial and technical assistance for new development and renovation, prepare project feasibility analyses, assemble land for resale if necessary, negotiate agreements, strive to retain existing successful businesses, and recruit new ventures.
3. **Partnership:** Negotiate a working partnership with business and property owners to carry out the *Comprehensive Plan*. Under this negotiated partnership, the City would provide funds for public improvements, redevelopment incentives, and assistance to the Business Improvements Districts and DECI. In return, property owners invest in the rehabilitation of their buildings in accordance with design standards and provide financial support to DECI.

For the Downtown Eau Claire enhancement effort to be successful, key private and public sector leaders and constituents must plan and implement together, in partnership. A shared direction, a unified voice, and action are essential for Downtown success.

4. **Funding:** Establish a funding mechanism for revitalization that is fair, efficient and reliable. The City will prepare with this mechanism a five-year program of capital improvements to streets, parking, utilities, parks and trails consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan*. In addition to revenues from the existing Business Improvement Districts, the following sources should be considered to fund the enhancement effort:
 - Downtown business owners and commercial property owners
 - Real estate developers
 - Banks
 - Utilities
 - Institutions
 - Service clubs
 - Foundations, major employers area-wide
 - Area-wide corporations and industry
 - City, county, state and federal government
5. **Leadership:** Facilitate an ongoing core of leaders for Downtown revitalization that will build a consensus for this *Plan*. Both private-sector leadership and public sector commitment are critical to the success of the Downtown enhancement effort.

6. **Business Retention:** Continue the City and DECI business retention programs, which include consultations with business owners, keeping an inventory of Downtown space, and administering loan programs. Additional actions could be taken, such as better snow removal, improved window displays, better window lighting, street tree lights in the winter, and improvements to adjacent neighborhoods. Finally, Downtown should not be the sole location of the community's social service providers.
7. **Business Recruitment:** Focus recruitment activities on filling vacant buildings in the Historic Waterfront District, specifically on South Barstow Street. A detailed outline for an expanded business-recruiting program is presented in the *Action Agenda*, including business prospecting, recruitment materials, working with the real estate community, and being aggressive in filling spaces.
8. **Marketing:** Define and implement an overall, comprehensive marketing campaign that includes media relations, special events, a Web site, a brochure, and on-street Downtown directories with DECI being responsible for completing necessary mailings.
9. **Forums:** Hold regular community forums coordinated by DECI to keep the enhancement process open and inclusive by inviting business owners, property owners, residents, investors, adjacent neighborhood residents, and the general public to learn about ongoing developments in the Downtown, discuss upcoming projects and ask questions and offer input.
10. **Action Agenda Updates:** Provide for regular reviews of the *Action Agenda 2001* by DECI to determine appropriate adjustments to project priorities and to update Downtown marketing information and strategies.

Objective 2 – Business Development and Marketing

Provide business development and marketing support to encourage diverse economic activity in the Downtown.

Policies:

1. **Downtown Employers:** Work to retain and attract major employers, particularly offices, corporate headquarters, health-care services, and courts.

These key anchor tenants bring workers, as well as legal and professional services, to the Downtown during the traditional workweek.
2. **Entertainment, Civic, Recreational and Cultural Resources:** Work to retain and attract entertainment, civic, recreational, and cultural resources.

The L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, State Theater, Children's Museum, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, cinema theaters, riverfront parks, and trails are key anchor tenants that bring area residents and visitors to the Downtown during the evening and weekend hours. Marketing of the Downtown should focus on the

Downtown as a regional activity center, with performance space for chamber and orchestral music, as well as a central location for theater and arts with places for artists to show and sell art, as well as unique location for display of public art and outdoor sculpture.

3. **Downtown Loan Funds:** Continue to support revitalization of Downtown properties through the Downtown Facade Loan Program, Code Compliance Program, and the Downtown Loan Pool.
4. **Incentives:** Ensure the City's financial programs keep pace with the changing economic conditions in the Downtown.
5. **Retail Support:** Work with Downtown organizations to identify and market the unique retail orientations of the Downtown.
6. **Pedestrian Activity:** Increase pedestrian activity in the Downtown through the creation of new event spaces, housing, and pedestrian-oriented businesses, such as restaurants, brew pubs, bookstores, art galleries, specialty stores, gift stores and expansion of the farmers' market.
7. **Community Spaces:** Create large community spaces that can support community celebrations and events.

Objective 3 – Redevelopment

Support redevelopment of blighted, vacant, or underutilized properties and sites in the Downtown.

Policies:

1. **Redevelopment Authority (RDA):** Ensure adequate funding and support for the RDA to plan and carry out redevelopment projects in the Downtown. Potential redevelopment areas are identified in Figure 12-2.
2. **Redevelopment Tools:** Address the cost differential between redeveloping obsolete, blighted or contaminated sites and preparing greenfield sites; evaluate using a variety of financing tools, including tax increment finance, state, and federal programs, and local revolving loan funds.
3. **Master Planning for Redevelopment:** Facilitate redevelopment involving larger or more complex projects by preparing a master plan or issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a master plan that addresses private development features, as well as public infrastructure and amenities.

Ensure that plans evaluating the redevelopment potential of areas include an evaluation of the existing building resources within such areas to assess whether any buildings should be retained or restored.

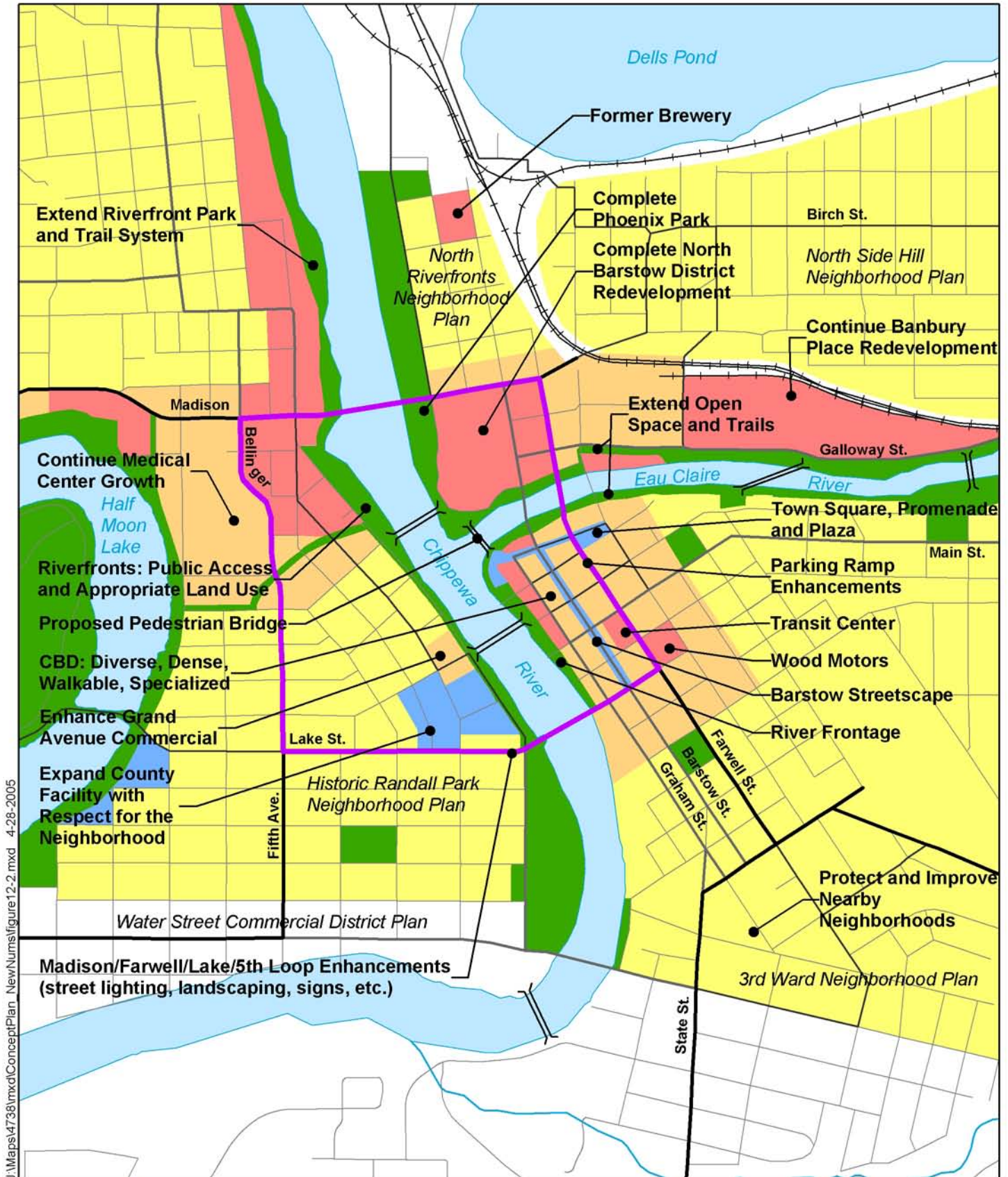


Figure 12-2

Major Physical Improvements and Redevelopment Areas



- Potential Redevelopment Areas
- Major Public Facilities
- Major Parks and Trails
- Other Downtown Mixed-Use Areas
- Downtown Fringe Neighborhoods

4. **Eminent Domain:** Use the powers of eminent domain where necessary to meet Downtown redevelopment goals.

Objective 4 – Riverfront Development

Encourage the use of the riverfront and adjacent open spaces as a key-organizing feature for the design and orientation of both public facilities and private development.

The Phoenix Riverfront Park, currently under development, is a major design focal point in the Downtown and should be linked to other community public spaces by pedestrian pathways and trails.

Policies:

1. **Public Open Space:** Use public open space as a key-organizing feature for development, and maximize pedestrian activity by establishing an interconnected open space system.
2. **Phoenix Park:** Complete development of Phoenix Park so as to provide the community with a well-designed public space with pedestrian connections to the regional trail system, neighborhood parks, and adjacent residential neighborhoods.
3. **Neighborhood Connections:** Extend linear parks and greenways from the Downtown into adjacent neighborhoods and beyond.
4. **Pathways:** Create a continuous and connected river pathway system along the riverbank from the Clairemont bridge to Banbury Place and north to the trail extension.
5. **Overlooks:** Use the public streets as frequent connections with overlooks to the riverfronts from adjoining districts.
6. **Vistas:** Promote the ability of the public to reach the river edge to experience its views and vistas.
7. **Access:** Provide adequate public access to the rivers for boating, recreation, fishing, canoeing, etc.

Objective 5 – Pedestrian Orientation

Enhance the walkability of the Downtown by ensuring safe, attractive, and pleasant pedestrian routes and connections within the Downtown area and between the Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, public parks, and major activity centers.

Policies:

1. **Pedestrian Connections:** Complete the following key pedestrian connections in the Downtown:
 - Wisconsin Street from Banbury Place to the Farmers Market in Phoenix Park
 - Eau Claire and Gibson Streets from the City Hall Plaza to the Chippewa riverfront
 - Main Street from Dewey Street to the riverfront
 - Grand Avenue from the Courthouse to City Hall
 - Seaver Street from the bluff to the riverfront YMCA
 - Fulton Street from Half Moon Lake to the Phoenix Park trailhead via Fifth Street and the former railroad right-of-way and bridge
 - Beach Street from the hospital to the river
 - Pedestrian bridge over the Eau Claire River, south of Phoenix Park

The streets identified above should become strongly pedestrian in character without disrupting vehicular traffic flow, should serve as direct linkages between parks, landmarks and other activity centers, and should provide visual cues about their function and destination. Land uses along the connections should be made active and safe. Gaps in the connection enclosures should be filled with compatible land uses.

2. **Walkability:** Prepare a detailed plan for sidewalks and trails to and through the Downtown that emphasizes the importance of walking in the Downtown.
3. **Bicycle Access:** Prepare and implement a detailed plan for bicycle access to and through the Downtown that locates public and private bicycle parking racks and, where possible, lockers throughout the Downtown. Incorporate Wisconsin Department of Transportation bicycle planning guidelines.
4. **Signalized Intersections:** Study the sequence and timing of the walk lights at signalized intersections Downtown to determine if they can be more responsive to pedestrians.

Objective 6 – Downtown Design

Encourage the consistent use of Downtown design standards and principles for buildings and public spaces to guide all public and private developments in the Downtown.

Policies:

1. **Downtown Design Principles:** Use the following Downtown design principles as supplements to the City Zoning Code to guide public and private improvements in the Downtown:

- Recognize and preserve good design from the past, maintain the Downtown's unique characteristics, and encourage improvements compatible with the character of the Downtown and its principal districts.
- Improve public spaces and ensure that the Downtown's appearance enhances efforts to improve economic activity.
- Acknowledge the rivers and encourage all development to draw from this beginning and enhance the Downtown's unique riverfront setting.
- Identify sites suitable for public or private landmarks that enhance the identity of the Downtown. Site new structures in a way that orients the visitor and organizes the development pattern.
- Utilize building edges to define the streets, edges and paths between spaces and use "build-to lines" so structures enclose and define streets, plazas and parks so that open space does not feel barren, uninviting, or exposed to the weather. Animate these edges with windows – not blank walls.
- Generate activity day and night by designing buildings to create a mixture of uses along streets.
- Design interesting public spaces and carry attention to detail to the design of individual blocks, buildings, and smaller courts and streetscapes that result in attractive pedestrian environments.
- Emphasize the relationship of buildings to the street by facing buildings toward and situated close to the public street. Streets should be lined with buildings without intervening parking lots. Each building along a street should have windows and doors that face that street.
- Provide sidewalks and pedestrian pathways that allow people to walk easily throughout the Downtown and to cross streets safely.
- Encourage Downtown property to be used more intensively than in the rest of the City. Overall, land should be developed significantly more densely than it is elsewhere in Eau Claire. The highest development densities should be in the Historic Waterfront District and on the larger redevelopment sites. Density should generally decrease and make a smooth transition to the surrounding existing residential neighborhoods.
- Provide a mixture of types of development in Downtown, including shops, offices, housing, medical buildings, schools and places of worship. The City should favorably consider redevelopment proposals that include two or more types of land use on the same block or even in the same building as long as the central principles of density, relationship to the street, walking, and quality are maintained. A desirable commercial combination would be retail or service businesses on the first floor with offices above. Housing should generally not be located on the first floor in mixed-used developments.
- Downtown buildings and sites should have high quality, long lasting materials, and design.
- Downtown should take better advantage of its greatest natural attributes, the views of two rivers, and especially the confluence point. Riverfront land should not be used for parking or other outdoor storage, nor should buildings present their worst sides to the rivers. The river should either be lined with public parks and walkways or land uses that benefit from the location, such as apartment buildings, offices, and restaurants. Ideally, there would be a public open space corridor between the top of the river bluff and the adjacent private river-oriented development.

- Views to parking lots should be softened by landscaping, which may include low brick or stone walls, grassy berms, shrubs, trees, or opaque fences. Fences should be used to separate dissimilar and incompatible land uses such as commercial buildings or parking lots from housing.

2. Downtown Land Use Pattern: Ensure that the long-term future pattern of land use is generally consistent with Figure 12-2.

It is understood that it may take a long time to achieve this pattern, and during the transition period there will be temporary inconsistencies and incompatible relationships.

Changing market conditions or unforeseen opportunities may make it appropriate to deviate somewhat from this pattern. Such plan amendments are acceptable as long as the key principles continue to be followed. The City intends that the Downtown planning area eventually consist of a variety of business, housing, and public land uses that are built in a relatively dense and urban manner.

3. Signs: Ensure that Downtown signs generally conform to the following design standards:

- The City should prepare and adopt an illustrated set of sign guidelines for Downtown and adopt them by reference into the Sign Code.
- Thought should be given in the design of each building to sign location, size, lighting, and materials on the facade of the structure. A horizontal band should be established on each facade to contain all wall signs. Generally, individual letters should be used and backlit plastic panel signs should not be allowed.
- Freestanding or pylon signs should not be allowed in Downtown because they would detract from the desired urban appearance of Downtown and compete with building locations.
- Encourage the use of projecting wall signs that are artfully designed to include a logotype or symbol of the business, be indirectly lit and be sized in careful proportion to the space they inhabit.
- Wall signs should fit into the building architecture, and projecting signs should artfully convey the nature of the business.

4. Public Art: Encourage the incorporation of special decorative features in both public improvements and private development to add visual interest, express local pride and convey cultural heritage.

Artistic features should be integral to and designed in conjunction with the building, public space or facility rather than being an afterthought or appendage. Public art may be as subtle as a relief on the face of a manhole cover or as dramatic as a granite water feature. Other examples may include sidewalk pavings, street intersection pavings, neon sculpture, brick patterns on building walls, sculpture, murals, and seasonal banners. Public art should be made of high-quality, long-lasting materials and executed by designers who are experienced with outdoor settings, architecture, or public works. Public art should be included in both public

improvements and private development to add visual interest, express local pride, and convey cultural heritage.

5. **Streetscape:** Ensure that street edges in the Downtown are improved with decorative lighting, trees, and other features to add visual interest and facilitate walking. A hierarchy of streetscape elements should be established along the Downtown roadway corridor system and at key roadway intersections.

A high level of improvements should be installed along the central street loop system of Barstow, Farwell, Madison, Fifth, and Lake. These improvements should include such design features as:

- Scored concrete sidewalks 5 to 16 feet wide
- Trees in grates
- Pedestrian scale lighting w/banner arms and weather resistant electrical outlets along designated streets
- Decorative paving in crosswalks
- Decorative railing or landscape buffers along edges of parking lots

Other streets in the Downtown should include improvements with:

- Eight foot wide scored concrete walks
- Pedestrian-scale lighting
- Striped paving in crosswalks
- Landscape buffers along the edges of parking lots

6. **Intersection:** Implement a hierarchy of intersection treatments along Downtown roadway corridors to reinforce transitions between streetscape level treatments. A high level of improvements should be provided at key intersections of Barstow, Farwell, Madison, Fifth, and Lake and should include:

- Expanded decorative paving areas
- Overhead trellis structures
- Raised flower planters
- Shrub planting beds
- Benches
- Trash receptacles
- Directional signage

Other intersections in the Downtown should include:

- Shrub planting beds
- Benches
- Trash receptacles
- Directional signage

7. **Special Gateway Entry Features:** Install prominent gateway design features at highly visible approaches to Downtown to signify arrival in the Downtown. Possible entry feature elements could include:

- Entry monument
- Large flower and shrub planting area
- Decorative paving plaza and outdoor seating area

- Art or sculpture feature
- Ornamental fencing

8. **Building Improvements:** Encourage well-designed exterior improvements to buildings and structures to enhance the architectural and economic value of the Downtown. The City should work with Downtown organizations and building owners to ensure an ongoing rehabilitation program to improve and upgrade the facades of existing buildings. Such programs may include technical and design assistance, financial incentives, and consideration of implementing design review criteria. Building and property owners should be encouraged to remove graffiti within 24 hours. The design and display of business signs and awnings should be incorporated into the overall design of the building exterior and be consistent with general Downtown design standards for signs.

The City should prepare written and illustrated design guidelines for building rehabilitation and upkeep to assist and educate building owners on the value of appropriate exterior improvements.

9. **Wayfinding Sign System:** Implement a coordinated wayfinding signing system to assist pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists arriving and leaving Downtown. Such signs should also provide information for parking and major attractions Downtown. These signs should be well designed and made of high-quality materials so as to convey a tone of permanence and civic pride.
10. **Interior System Upgrades:** Encourage improvements to interior building structures to upgrade electrical, plumbing, and heating and ventilation systems to correct existing building code nonconformities or to upgrade systems and encourage development of vacant or underutilized spaces. The City should work with other community organizations to promote ongoing interior rehabilitation of Downtown buildings, including the provision of financial assistance for code compliance programs.

Objective 7 – Circulation

Provide a safe internal circulation system that is interconnected among districts with pedestrian and vehicular, and multi-modal access from the peripheral highway system.

The *Comprehensive Plan* anticipates improved access from the peripheral highway system. Cameron Street should be linked to I-94 to complete the east-west Crosstown arterial that includes Madison and Birch Streets. The Barstow-Madison-Farwell-Lake-Fifth Avenue loop will interconnect the four districts. Directional signs, special landscaping, and lighting around the loop will aid orientation.

Policies:

1. **Street Connections:** Coordinate with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Eau Claire County to ensure that street and highway system connections to the Downtown are improved.

2. **Loop System:** Enhance the Barstow, Madison, Farwell, Lake and Fifth loop system and connect Downtown to the surrounding neighborhoods and to other major city districts such as the University.
3. **Street Design:** Incorporate all streets in the Downtown as part of the public open space system serving both pedestrians and vehicles. Awnings, benches, lighting, and trees should be used to enhance the street environment. The character of each street should be considered when deciding upon building setbacks and open spaces. Sidewalks should be required for all streets.
4. **Transportation Center:** Encourage the construction of a new multi-use, multi-modal Transportation Center in Downtown that incorporates a design that allows the integrated transfer of users among buses, autos, and bicycles. The City should maintain the Downtown as the location for the main transit access hub.
5. **Trolley Route:** Explore the feasibility of implementing a small bus or trolley route that connects the four districts as major redevelopment occurs in the Downtown.
6. **Traffic Circulation Study:** Undertake a traffic circulation study of the Downtown area prior to initiating design work for any major street reconstruction projects. Such study shall include an analysis of the one-way street system and on-street parking availability and design.

Objective 8 – Parking

Provide a well-integrated system of surface and ramp parking consistent with Downtown design principles to meet mixed-use parking needs of Downtown.

A sound parking management strategy is essential. On-street parking is often overlooked as a resource in the Downtown area. The 40+ blocks on the East Bank represent a parking resource of more than 1,600 spaces. A three-pronged plan of on-street, surface, and structured parking is proposed. Three new ramps are proposed for consideration to meet future needs: two in the North Barstow Redevelopment District and one at the new transit center.

Well-designed and maintained surface parking can be an asset to a business district. Parking should not be regarded as only a temporary, interim use not meriting appearance investment. Surface parking lots, especially along the rivers, will need to be designed consistent with policies within this *Plan* for them to be an asset to the Downtown.

Policies:

1. **Parking Supply:** Ensure that the Historic Waterfront District has an adequate supply of visible and accessible parking at a reasonable cost that developers and prospective tenants will have the confidence necessary to make long-term commitments to invest in the Downtown.

2. **Ramps:** Expand the use of multi-level parking ramps to meet future Downtown parking needs and to reduce the amount of land in the Downtown devoted to parking.
3. **Location:** Relocate all-day parking through a gradual and systematic program toward the periphery of the Historic Waterfront office-retail core, while providing convenient short-term parking near retail areas.
4. **Design:** Require that all new public and private surface parking lots include hardy perimeter landscaping, uniform signage, curbing, and an asphalt surface. Whenever feasible, require that existing lots be retrofitted with these features. The edges of surface parking lots should be softened with landscaping, ornamental fences, or low masonry or brick walls. Require special landscaping and buffering for existing surface lots adjacent to the riverfronts. Where possible, buildings will be used to screen parking from street view. Vehicle access to parking lots should be limited to locations designated by the City for reasons of traffic safety and flow.
5. **Bicycle Loops:** Ensure that bicycle parking loops are provided in key locations throughout the Downtown, such as access points to trails and pathways, public park facilities, transit center and major public activity centers.
6. **Parallel Parking:** Allow parallel parking on each street where it is judged feasible with respect to space and safety. The objective would be to have parking along most street segments for the sake of adding to the public parking supply and to provide an additional sense of protection from the traffic for pedestrians.

Objective 9 – Housing

Encourage a mix of housing styles and opportunities within and surrounding the Downtown to meet the diverse economic needs of the community.

Policies:

1. **Historic Homes:** Encourage the preservation of historic or architecturally significant dwellings in the Downtown.
2. **Loft Apartments:** Initiate efforts to increase the number of loft apartments on the upper floors of existing commercial buildings throughout the Downtown.
3. **Empty Nester Housing:** Seek the development of new market-rate housing marketed toward persons in the 55-64 year old age bracket. This age bracket is projected to increase substantially over the next twenty years in the larger Eau Claire housing market area, which includes the City of Eau Claire and an area within a ten-mile radius. From a marketing perspective, households in this age bracket tend to exhibit a greater interest in the kinds of high amenity, zero property maintenance housing available in urban centers such as the Downtown. Expansion of the cultural, entertainment, and recreational assets of the Downtown, combined with unique river view orientations, provide the Downtown with an opportunity to attract these households to new well-designed condominium and rental housing units.

4. **Adaptive Re-use:** Foster the adaptive re-use of existing buildings in the Downtown to include housing, or a mix of housing and commercial uses. For example, future redevelopment for the Huebsch building on North Dewey Street or the City Parks and Recreation building on First Avenue should consider the incorporation of housing as part of the re-use of the building.
5. **Mixed-use:** Support the development of new mixed-use buildings combining retail and office uses on the lower floors and market rate housing on the upper floors. The City should seek the development of new mixed-use buildings along the east bank of the Chippewa River in the Historic Waterfront District, North Barstow District, and Medical Center District.
6. **Property Maintenance:** Encourage the upkeep and maintenance of the existing housing stock within the neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown.
7. **Code Enforcement:** Ensure effective enforcement of building, health, safety, and zoning codes for properties in the Downtown and in the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Objective 10 – Courthouse District

Encourage the development of the Courthouse District as a government activity center area emphasizing government and professional offices, personal services, and convenience retail and food establishments, serving primarily residents of the neighborhood and employees and users of the Courthouse campus.

The Courthouse District is bordered by Fulton Street on the north, the Chippewa River on the east, Lake Street on the south and Fifth Avenue on the west. It includes the County Courthouse complex, West Grand Avenue and the surrounding residential neighborhood.

In 1994-95, the Courthouse was expanded by 50,000 square feet with additional surface parking. The Courthouse campus serves as the key anchor for this district and should be designed to take better advantage of its riverfront setting and provide suitable transition to the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Grand Avenue pedestrian bridge, closed to automobile traffic in 1980, provides a connection to the Historic Waterfront District, on the east bank of the Downtown. A pedestrian pathway and riverfront park connect this district to the state bicycle trail and the North Barstow District.

Policies:

1. **Economic Orientation:** Support the focus of the Courthouse District on professional office, personal service firms, and convenience retail and food establishments, primarily oriented to serve the residents and employees of the district and County complex users. The district commercial area should be actively marketed as a unique, pedestrian-oriented business district serving area residents, area employees and County complex users. The City should also encourage

marketing of housing along the river bicycle trail to take advantage of expanding trail use by providing “bed and breakfast” inns near the riverfront.

2. **Neighborhood Preservation:** Guide the direction and limits of future courthouse expansion to create certainty for adjoining property reinvestment. Commercial and office uses should not be allowed to encroach into the nearby residential area. Business properties should continue to be well maintained. The City will encourage the preservation of existing homes and neighborhood character and continue to work with the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Association and property owners in ensuring compliance with applicable property maintenance codes and securing continued reinvestment and upgrading of residential properties in the area.
3. **Courthouse Expansion:** Encourage expansion of the Courthouse facilities to be oriented east toward the river. Future building expansions should continue to remain mindful of the importance of maintaining high-quality housing in this district.
4. **West Grand Avenue BID:** Support the efforts of the West Grand Avenue Business Improvement District to represent and enhance the businesses and commercial properties in the area.

Objective 11 – Historic Waterfront District

Encourage the development of the Historic Waterfront District as the principal Downtown location for art, entertainment, civic uses, specialty businesses, and food establishments.

The Historic Waterfront District is south of the Eau Claire River, east of the Chippewa River, west of the bluff, and north of Earl Street. This area was the City’s traditional Downtown commercial core for many years and is still home to government, finance, arts and entertainment, hotels, and office buildings, as well as much of the Downtown’s older architecture. The major components of this district include the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, City Hall and the Performing Arts Center. The key anchor is the existing Downtown hotel and conference center, bordered by Farwell, Gibson, and Barstow Streets and Grand Avenue, which includes a 120-room hotel, 20,000 square feet of exhibition space and a 500-space parking structure. South Barstow Street should be enhanced as the prime Downtown location for art, entertainment, specialty retail, and food establishments. These uses should be located in the first floor of buildings along South Barstow Street. Housing and offices should be located in the upper stories of these structures.

Connections to the river are proposed along Eau Claire, Gibson, Main and Seaver Streets. The Downtown riverwalk is proposed to extend from Lake Street to the “S” bridge. Farwell Street is the major southern approach route to the Downtown, and Wilson Park is the southern gateway.

Policies:

1. **Downtown Plaza:** Encourage the development of public spaces in the Downtown that can serve as design focal points for community gatherings and identify a central space to serve as a Downtown plaza. Long-term redevelopment of the district should include creation of a Downtown plaza located between the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library and City Hall.
2. **Riverwalk:** Construct a continuous riverwalk from Lake Street to the “S” bridge and include public overlooks at key points along the river. Encourage location of food and entertainment establishments along the riverwalk so that pedestrians can stroll along the pathway and diners can sit at outdoor cafes.
3. **Parking:** Improve the public parking system in the district by renovating the Civic Center Ramp to make it more user friendly, maximizing the number of on-street spaces along Barstow by providing angled parking where possible, and constructing a new multi-level parking ramp on the current site of the Transit Center surface parking lot. In addition, the City should actively discourage or prohibit additional surface public or private parking from being constructed along the riverfronts. The City will commit to providing long-term parking to attract business tenants, including a new parking ramp/transportation center.
4. **Public Improvements:** Incorporate projects in the City Capital Improvement Program to complete the following key public improvements in the Historic Waterfront District:
 - Reconstruct South Barstow Street and the adjacent sidewalks from Lake Street to the Eau Claire River;
 - Create a public Town Square between City Hall and the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library along Eau Claire Street, between Farwell and Dewey Streets;
 - Create a small riverfront plaza at what would be the west end of Eau Claire Street near the confluence of the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers and link this plaza to the town square via a sidewalk promenade along Eau Claire Street incorporating special streetscape and landscaping designs;
 - Construct a bridge over the Eau Claire River connecting Phoenix Park and the Haymarket Riverfront Plaza area.
5. **Destinations:** Encourage the expansion and retention of unique destination centers such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Children’s Museum, L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, Phoenix Park and trail system, and State Theater.
6. **Upper-story Housing:** Encourage the development of additional upper-story housing in the district to create a more vibrant commercial district with people living, working, and patronizing the core of the Downtown during the day, evenings, and weekends. The City, in partnership with Downtown organizations and financial institutions, should initiate ongoing programs to provide financial incentives to add market-rate loft housing to the upper floors of existing buildings and to provide reserved off-street parking for Downtown residents.

7. **Recruitment:** Encourage business recruitment and retention efforts to enhance the Historic Waterfront District as the art, entertainment, specialty retail, and food corridor of Downtown.
8. **Redevelopment Priorities:** Encourage completion of the following key redevelopment priorities for the district:
 - Farmers store plaza and adjacent (west) surface parking lot – retail, entertainment, restaurants, office, and/or housing
 - Chippewa River Frontage – mixed-use buildings that take advantage of the river views, housing over restaurants, greenbelt along the river, outdoor dining
 - Wood Motor Site Parking Lot – office and possible upper level residential with a parking structure
 - Transportation Center

Objective 12 – North Barstow District

Encourage the development of the North Barstow District as the location for the Downtown’s showcase riverfront development anchored by the North Barstow Redevelopment Area on the west and the mixed industrial, business, and housing of Banbury Place to the east.

The North Barstow District is a former industrial and mixed-use area located generally east of the Chippewa River between Madison Street and the Eau Claire River. The North Barstow District is the most diverse of the four Downtown districts, containing a broad mix of land uses from light manufacturing, retail, offices, single-family, and apartment residential. In addition, the district includes two large redevelopment projects: Banbury Place and the North Barstow Street District. Banbury Place is a two-million square-foot business park with a highly successful mix of industrial, warehouse, office, retail, and housing uses, as well as a daycare center. The North Barstow Redevelopment Project has resulted in the redevelopment of the former brownfield Phoenix Steel site to Phoenix Park, which includes a trailhead facility, a farmers’ market, and the corporate headquarters for the Royal Credit Union. Completion of these projects serves as a significant economic stimulus for additional office, retail, and housing projects in the district.

Barstow is Eau Claire’s “Main Street,” and it should be designed as such. Its pedestrian environment should be greatly improved so as to link the North Barstow and the Historic Waterfront Districts. The pedestrian links should be visually interesting, appear safe, and provide some shelter from the weather. Attracting pedestrians across the Eau Claire River is a challenge that could be overcome by special streetscape treatments involving lighting, shelter, and overlooks so that the structure becomes a pedestrian destination in the Downtown, as well as a bridge over the river.

Policies:

1. **Redevelopment:** Continue the redevelopment of the North Barstow area as a mixed-used development integrating office, retail, and housing in a riverfront setting.

2. **Phoenix Park:** Continue the development of Phoenix Park, including the State Bicycle Trailhead, Farmers' Market, and State Bike Trail, and connecting pedestrian bridges, underpasses and linkages.
3. **Existing Residential:** Encourage the preservation and retention of the residential neighborhood west of Banbury Place as a unique residential enclave of mixed-residential uses and distinctive architectural styles.
4. **Huebsch Building:** Encourage the redevelopment of this property as a mixed-use building with retail on the first floor, restaurants on the first or upper floors, and housing or offices on the upper floors. The historic brick building on the site should be preserved and restored. Parking should be structured and a green public edge created along the river.

Objective 13 – Medical Center District

Encourage the development of the Medical Center District as a health care services activity center area anchored by the Luther Midelfort Hospital medical campus, related office uses, and convenience retail and support businesses.

The Medical Center District is roughly a 35-block area bordered by Cameron Street on the north, the Chippewa River on the east, Fulton Street on the south, and Half Moon Lake on the west. The district includes Luther-Midelfort Hospital, the Bellinger-Madison business district, the L.E. Phillips Senior Center, the West Riverside office building, and the City Parks and Recreation building. The key anchor for this district is the Luther-Midelfort Hospital, whose long-term expansion is a major catalyst for the district. The Madison-Bellinger commercial area serves both as a neighborhood retail area and as a business support area for the hospital. The Medical Center is on the western side of the area's loop street system and forms the western gateway to the Downtown. The riverfront park system will be extended north through this area with connections to the hospital.

Policies:

1. **Medical Center District Plan:** Support the creation of an overall coordinated development plan that links the future expansion and use of the City Parks and Recreation building, West Riverside office building, and L.E. Phillips Senior Center to the long-term master plan for the Luther-Midelfort (Mayo) Medical Center campus. Encourage the hospital's involvement in the development of the surrounding commercial area in a way that promotes a pedestrian-scale community commercial district. Building setbacks and sidewalks should define and enclose the street to make the area pedestrian friendly and safe.
2. **Park and Pathways:** Continue development of the riverfront park system, including a pathway extending around Half Moon Lake and extending north of Half Moon Beach along the former railroad right-of-way.
3. **Business Development:** Encourage the economic orientation of the Madison Street commercial area as a neighborhood retail area that supports both adjacent

residential neighborhoods, as well as provides services to hospital employees, patients, and visitors. Retail and food businesses serving area residents and hospital users should be encouraged to locate along Madison. Consideration should be given to designating the Oxford Avenue corridor north of Cameron as a future redevelopment project area.

4. **Compact Commercial Development:** Recognize Fulton Street as the southern edge of hospital expansion. The commercial areas within the district along Madison and Oxford and adjacent to the hospital should be kept as clustered and compact as possible.
5. **Housing:** Encourage the development of a variety of well-designed housing options for employees in the district.
6. **Parking:** Encourage future parking needs of the hospital complex to be provided by multi-level parking facilities. The City should discourage the construction of additional surface parking lots fronting on either Madison or Bellinger Streets.
7. **Parks and Recreation Building:** Encourage the relocation of the Parks and Recreation Department Community Center at North Oxford Avenue and First Avenue to a more appropriate location and the redevelopment of the site for housing or business offices, either through remodeling of the existing building or new construction.